

ABSTRACT**Data Switching Arbitration Arrangements**

There is disclosed a masking unit (REQMSK) for use in a data packet switching system. The data switching system being of the type having a memoryless cross-back switch (SM) providing cyclic connections under the control of a switch arbiter (SCARB) between ingress routers (IR0, IR1, IR2 and IR3) and egress routers (ER0, ER1, ER2 and ER3). Each of the ingress routers (IR0 - IR3) is provided with incoming packet buffering on a virtual output queue basis (VOQ0.0, VOQ0.1, VOQ0.2, and VOQ0.3 for ingress router IR0). Each virtual output queue also produces a connection request signal REQ0.0 to REQ3.3 when the corresponding queue has a data packet in it. The masking unit REQMSK is arranged to randomly mask out correlated connection requests.